

BOOK REVIEWS

Clement Earp, *The Yea Goldfields*, The Author, Ashburton, Victoria, 2013, ISBN: 978-0-646-91085-7, 110 pp, Illustrations, maps, foot-notes, bibliography, index, 210 x 297mm. Printed and distributed by Digital Print Australia. <<http://digitalprintaustralia.com/bookstore.html>>

Clement Earp has uncovered a wealth of information about this scenic but somewhat neglected mining area, to produce an attractive book with an interesting gold-field story and valuable geological data.

The book is divided into two main sections: pages 3 to 41 are described as ‘A Narrative History of Yea and its Goldfields’, and the second section from page 44 deals with records pertaining to various mining localities of the Yea Goldfield. Lastly, there are brief histories of the Geology and the Geologists. However, the list of geologists requires checking, as Thomas Couchman was a District Surveyor and later Chief Mining Surveyor and was not a geologist. An extensive list of references or bibliography covers two pages and there is an index to persons and mines.

In the preface it is explained that this book is the story of some of Yea's gold working areas and that its compass is limited to a few localities along the Yea anticline that runs across the Murrindindi, Yea and Goulburn Rivers. The author acknowledges that such an approach leaves out the gold and antimony mines of Homewood, the Welcome Mine near Junction Hill and the Tea Tree (spelt Ti-tree in early records) workings. It seems that the author's interest in palaeontology and the debate concerning Silurian graptolites at Barkley's Cutting, along with interest in the Yea Anticline have dominated his research into mining activities along this geological feature.

After dismissing the early reports of finding gold in 1851 on the Boggy Creek, Mr Earp relates how the early mining took place at Providence Hill on the Yea Anticline, and at a place known as Ready Money Hill a mile to the north. Later in the book he gives details of what may be the earliest lease, No. 427 Sandhurst, registered in November 1862. James Daniel Webster registered the second lease in January 1865 but the author does not mention that in June the previous year, Webster had made application to register the ‘Providence Mining Association’ as a limited liability company, which was possibly the first of its type in the district. The author is hardly correct in writing that pound-keeping was a despised occupation. In fact it was a highly prized appointment that gave a substantial salary to the appointee.

In the section detailing gold records, the author details the various lease applications for Providence Hill subsequent to 1862. He also writes about a second area of mining at the Flat Lead Reefs, and states that in 1867 there was said to have been a rush on the alluvial ground with 150 to 200 claims taken up. Further information is given in his gold records section. Having written about Providence Hill and Flat Lead, the author then turns his attention to the Ghin Ghin Rush of 1867 and this section forms the major part of the narrative.

Mr Earp has taken the first two to three pages to deal with the original inhabitants of the Goulburn Valley and their mistreatment at the hands of the squatters and this provides a general introduction. To bridge this account to the time of the discovery of gold he makes an incorrect assumption regarding miners using the track of Hume and Hovel to get to Yea, for by 1851, the overland route between Sydney and Melbourne was well and truly that which crossed at Albury, and traversed Chiltern, Wangaratta, Benalla, Violet Town, and Longwood. Furthermore, he has discounted the crowds who cyclically rushed the Ovens Gold Fields from 1852 and who made new bush roads across the land. While it is true that Hume and Hovel passed by, close to Yea, it is doubtful if any prospectors followed that mountain top route.

The author then looks at the first reported discovery of gold in the Yea area, at first called Muddy Creek, and considers this 1851 report to be no more than a rumour. The Muddy Creek was officially renamed the Yea River in 1879, and it was not until 1859 that gold was found at Yea itself. The rich areas at Yea appear to have been worked into the first half of the twentieth century. Strangely, no mention is made of the last recorded attempt to mine at Providence Hill when in 1946 a local Cordial manufacturer and a Garage proprietor formed a No Liability Company titled the 'New Providence Gold Mine'.

The wider gold history does not concern the author although it would have made a suitable context in which to contrast Yea discoveries with other places like the Godfrey's Creek gold field, the subject of John Waghorn's, *Gobur and the Golden Gate*, 1982. It is also a pity that the author has excluded the Ti-tree area, which attracted at least eight Limited Liability Companies, while there were some 13 known in the remaining areas. Nevertheless, the account of the Ghin Ghin Gold Rush, which resulted from the striking of alluvial gold by Ezekiel Wilson Pennington and locals, James and Daniel McLeish, is a rewarding read for all who enjoy such accounts. Pennington made the discovery on 9th August 1867, and shared the Government reward of £50 with James McLeish. Alas, like numerous old gold field towns, Ghin Ghin is no longer 'but paddocks at a cross-roads' site. There is no subsequent account detailing the life of Pennington who also discovered the Godfrey's Creek gold field in August 1868, or of the great number of miners who left the district in 1871 for Gulgong in New South Wales. According to the Parkes *Western Champion* of January 8th 1909, Pennington successfully opened a rich mine near Tichborne. He died at Parkes in January 1909.

Governance of the area was split between the Beechworth and Sandhurst (Bendigo) Mining Districts until December 1873 when the Goulburn Division of the Beechworth District was re-defined to take in the South side of the Goulburn River from the King Parrot Creek to Mount Selwyn. Yea was then placed within the Goulburn Division, which included, Alexandra, Gobur, and other places. The size of the area and the fact that for a time the nearest Warden was at Kilmore in the Sandhurst District, explains the role of Warden Akehurst in dealing with the difficulties that arose over the Ghin Ghin prospecting claim. It was not until 1870 that a Court of Mines had been appointed for Alexandra, although during 1867 John Peterkin had been appointed to issue Miner's Rights, and Henry M. Taylor as acting Warden's Clerk. This discussion is omitted from Clement Earp's account, but the rush itself forms a major part of the

narrative section and is important for the issues it raises in relation to District Mining Board laws.

The Prospecting claim of Pennington and party was rushed several times, says Mr Earp, and eventually the claim jumpers lodged a complaint in the Warden's Court at Alexandra some 25 miles distant, and where all claims were to be registered. He continues: '... early in January 1868, the case of Little v Pennington came to a conclusion in the Warden's Court. Warden, Arthur Akehurst, ruled that the Jumpers had a valid claim'. That was not the end of the matter and the rioting continued. The case was then referred to the Court of the Chief Judge of Courts of Mines. This court had been created under the Mining Statute of 1865 and Justice Molesworth was appointed Chief Judge.

Unfortunately Mr Earp's discussion of this issue in relation to claim sizes is incorrect. He says that, 'back in the good old days, a prospecting claim for alluvial ground held under miner's rights was restricted to 12 square yards per man. This had changed by 1866'. However, Rule 5 in the notice, 'Licenses to dig and search for gold' published in the *Victoria Government Gazette* on 27th August 1851, stated that the extent of claims was to be regulated by the Commissioner of Crown Lands in each locality. As a result, and as witnessed in Ballarat, the early claim size was as small as eight feet by eight feet. Ralph Birrell's book, *Staking a Claim, M.U.P.*, 1998, states that this area was later increased in 1853 to twelve feet by twelve feet; not twelve yards square. In time a great number of changes took place relative to claims. Under the bye-laws of the Beechworth Mining District dated 1st May, 1866, Bye-law No. 7 dealt with Prospecting Claims, and this was the bye-law that was Pennington's undoing. Under this bye-law a prospecting claim entitled the prospector to an area 1,000 yards square with certain conditions as to location. Upon the discovery of payable gold, however, the claim was to be forfeited and then re-registered according to the number of men constantly employed on the claim, with an additional entitlement of an area of 500 yards in length by a width of 100 yards if the claim was in the bed or creek of a river. He was further entitled to an extended area equal to 20 entire single claims of the 'stated class.'

Eventually Mr Justice Molesworth sitting in the Equity Court, gave judgement substantially in favour of the defendants and to the chagrin of Pennington and party. In part he said: 'By the case, Mr. E.W. Pennington had duly taken possession of a prospecting claim under the Beechworth bye-laws, May 1, 1866, No. 7, and had so acted, or omitted to act, that his claim was forfeitable ...' (See 'Law Report' in the *Argus*, Melbourne, 20, March 1868, p. 6).

This clearly shows that Pennington's prospecting claim came under the bye-laws of the Beechworth Mining Board, and was not a declaration of the 1865 Mining Statute as indicated in the footnote on page 12. It was a sad fact that Pennington had failed to re-peg the claim after finding payable gold in accordance with the Bye-law. There is a great deal more to this story, which Clement Earp goes into with some detail.

This interesting narrative continues on to investigate 'Gold at Murrindindi', 'The Heyday of Higinbotham'; 'The '90s Depression'; and mining into the 20th Century. Mr Earp has gone to considerable effort in his gold records section of the book to provide detailed information concerning the leases on the various areas along the anticline. Each

section dealing with leases also includes newspaper reports Mining Registrar's reports and other material when available. Also provided are some gold returns and maps and photographs. The provision of so many maps is a great asset although several require north points. Altogether the book is a useful addition to Victoria's mining history and should interest all who like to explore areas such as Yea. The notes concerning the anticline and the account of various geologists will appeal to present-day fossickers and palaeontologists.

Robert W. P. Ashley

Ken Grubb, *Silver Hill: The University of Queensland Silver Mine Precinct*, published privately Brisbane, QLD, 1st edition October 2013, reprinted with minor changes March 2014. 52 pages including 13 illustrations, maps, ISBN 978-0-646-913-06-3. Available from Julius Kruttschnitt, Mineral Research Centre, Indooroopilly, Queensland; <ikmrc.uq.edu.au>

I must admit that whilst having knowledge of the University of Queensland 'Training Mine' and some of its history, I did not know its exact location. Ken Grubb's publication has rectified that, and brought the realisation that I had driven past this interesting site many times, totally unaware of its presence on Finney's Hill in the western part of Indooroopilly.

Silver Hill has evidently been produced with the uninformed public in mind and, to the mining historian it may appear superficial in its treatment of the historical detail and the mining techniques employed. It does however contain some useful information, albeit in a disjointed format. The author uses contemporary accounts, with little critical analysis, to provide a picture of the mine's history as a lead/silver producer, from its discovery in 1918 to its final abandonment in 1929, and its rehabilitation in the 1950s and 60s by the University of Queensland. As the university's experimental mine, along with the mineral research centre which also occupies the mine precinct, it has made a significant contribution to teaching and research over the last 50 years.

The University of Queensland Silver Mine Precinct is evidently an extremely interesting site and would be well worth a visit if the opportunity arises. This booklet provides a tantalising taste of its history, and the role it has played in the mining engineering and mineral research programmes at the university. No price for the booklet is given but the introduction makes it clear that any proceeds will be applied to the benefit of the mine, probably through the recently formed Friends of Silver Hill.

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Denis A. Cumming, Richard G. Hartley, (Compilers), *Westralian Founders of Twentieth Century Mining: Career Biographies of Mining Engineers, Mine Managers and Metallurgists who Worked in the Western Australian Mining Industry 1890-1920*, Richard G. Hartley, Rossmoyne, Western Australia, 2014. ISBN 9780-0-646-92228-7. i-iv, 190 pp. Maps. <richardhartley@westnet.com.au>

This is a publication that has had a long gestation, for it grew out of a project instigated by Denis A. Cumming sometime before he died in 1995. This left co-compiler, Richard Hartley, to complete the research and cataloguing of what has turned out to be a most informative biographical account of leaders, in what the authors refers to as the ‘Golden Era’ of Western Australian mining development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In one respect, the title of the book does a dis-service to the content, for while the biographies come under the heading of ‘Western Australia’, the nature of the perambulations of mining personnel means that many of those who feature in the pages were as at home during their careers in mining locations throughout Australia and the rest of the world as they were in WA. Thus the contents should appeal to readers well outside the confines of the ‘Western third’.

As noted in the introduction, not everyone who constituted the managerial class is listed, and indeed one problem faced by the compilers, who catalogued 700 eligible names for the period 1890-1920, was who to omit, and who to include. Eventually they settled on 306 biographical accounts, with those culled being omitted mainly because of dearth of documentation. If it is some consolation, those omitted are listed in an appendix, along with the positions they held in mining companies, and Richard Hartley hints that the possibility of a further volume to include some of these, and to also extend the list up to 1940, is not out of the question.

While the majority of entries are covered in 100 to 400 words, 30 of the more important characters received more generous treatment, being allocated between 500 to 1,000 words, while another 20 receive their accolades in even larger accounts. Among the latter are such well known mining personnel and entrepreneurs as John Alexander Agnew, whose activities were much involved with Herbert Hoover (another entry), and the managerial firm of Bewick Moreing and Company, and in the 1930s as a director of London based financial house, Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa. Another of the renowned ‘giants’ is American born Herbert E. Vail, who contributed greatly to the Western Australian goldmining scene in a managerial and consulting capacity. He was also managing director of Yampi Sound Mining before the federal government placed a ban on all iron ore exports in 1938 because of sensitivities associated with exporting iron ore to Japan. Metallurgists and sometime mine managers, George Klug and Ludwig Diehl are other prominent characters, who had a vital impact on improving smelting processes not only for gold recovery but also for copper and lead. Not everyone will agree with the compilers selection of these major characters, which appear to be heavily weighted towards people who had links with Bewick Moreing, though it is admitted by Richard Hartley that the choices were personal, and that readers might well have chosen differently.

To show the scope of the coverage, and to illustrate the multi-varied activities both inside and outside of mining, and also the migratory habits of the selected people, the randomly chosen example of Brian Harvey Hodgson Hooker, ARSM (1860-1932) illustrates why researchers might find the biographies of value:

Born in Kew, London, the son of the director of Kew Gardens, Hooker studied at the Royal School of Mines in London from 1878 to 1881 and then in Germany at the Clausthal School of Mines (1881-1882) and the Freiburg School of Mines (1883) before working as manager of the Grube Elisa Mine in Alsace from 1883. In 1885 he emigrated to Australia and in 1885-86 worked as assayer, then manager, of the Cunnigar GCo near Cootamundra in southern New South Wales. For three years from 1886 he was a lecturer in mineralogy at Gympie, Maryborough and Bundaberg for the Queensland Department of Mines. In 1889-93 he was manager for the Queensland Mineral Exploration Co Ltd of the Old and New Long Tunnel (gold) Mine in Kilkivan, 50km west of Gympie. He also held a Kilkivan gold mining lease for two years from 1892. He was a partner in the Bundaberg company, Hooker and Kekewich, mining engineers and assayers, in 1889-93 and was also a Kilkivan Shire councillor for three years from 1890. In September 1893 he was manager of Longwood Sluicing Co in Reefton, New Zealand, and also held a tin claim on Stewarts Island, New Zealand. In 1894 he moved to Western Australia to become manager of the Kalgoorlie mining company, Ivanhoe GMCo (ECGF Boulder) but resigned in August 1895 after a disagreement with the Melbourne directors over the progress of development work. He then appears to have joined Lake View and Boulder east GMCo but had left before May 1896 when Whitaker Wright acquired the company from which he formed Lake View Consols Ltd. Hooker also prepared a report on the Prince of Wales mining prospect (CGF Gnarlbine). Hooker moved to Kanowna in 1896 to manage North White Feather Consolidated GMCo (NECGF Kanowna), formed in March 1895. In 1900 he was in Borneo as mining engineer for Bengkayang CMCo and in the following year for Kahayan CMCo. In 1903 he returned to Western Australia to work on the cyaniding of tailings dumps in Southern Cross (YIGF) and, in 1906, was assayer at Kapunda Mines in South Australia. In 1911 he moved to Melbourne where he worked as a computer (statistical calculator) for the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and statistics until his retirement. He died in South Yarra in 1932 aged 72.

Such detail on so many personalities, along with sources provided in the publication for further research, presents a fruitful reference tool for those interested in mining's past.

The book also contains a number of excellent maps of the Western Australian goldfields, necessary if interested in locating the mines and areas where the various selected personnel were engaged. Also of interest is an appendix listing the significant innovations in gold metallurgy and processing technology in Western Australia between 1890-1920, and also a list of biographic references.

This has obviously been a labour of love and the compilers are to be congratulated on the production. However, as Richard Hartley states, there is always room for expansion as new information comes to light - and one problem noted by the reviewer is that not all references contain information on dates of birth and death, which is just one area where the compiler of the publication says he'll be delighted to receive information, so as to update the records.

This is a valuable easy reference source that mining historians will be more than pleased to have on their bookshelves.

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